

# *Sustainable Agriculture*

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## **New Immigrant Farm Program teaches farming, self-sufficiency**

Helping new immigrant families develop farming skills and become self-sufficient from their small-scale farming operations is the goal of a new program offered by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Minnesota Food Association and others.

“The program has a positive effect on new immigrant families who otherwise would not be served by traditional Extension programs,” says Nigatu Tadesse, Extension educator for the program. He conducts workshops and does one-to-one consultation farm visits for over 200 farmers who lease land from property owners in Dakota County.

Tadesse, in collaboration with Bob Olson, Extension educator in Washington County, taught Hmong farmers pesticide safety and advanced vegetable production and conducted private pesticide applicator training. Other co-workers helped Tadesse with the Latino groups, where topics were organic vegetable production; soil sampling and fertility; value-added product development; and marketing, food safety and canning.

Another segment of the program is a “Farming Incubator Program,” sponsored jointly by the Extension Service and College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences. It was established to help primarily new immigrants in the Twin Cities area who will move into small-scale farm operations.

There are 20 participants farming on 28 acres of land. They come from diverse cultures: Albanians from Kosovo, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Hmong, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Somalis, Tunisians and those from the mainstream culture.

Farm size ranges from one to three acres. Trainees grow diverse vegetable crops, herbs, flowers and specialty crops. They pay \$175 per acre for land rent.

“They will be allowed to farm in this educational program for no more than five years,” Tadesse says. “They have agreed to take responsibility to transition from the educational training site by personally acquiring leased or purchased land to relocate.”

“The new immigrants work very hard—16- to 18-hour days in busy seasons,” Tadesse says. “They have very few resources such as machinery, but being successful and independent is their hope and dream.”

## **“Food with a Face” promoted by Whole Farm Cooperative**

The Whole Farm Cooperative (WFC) is a cooperative of 30 member families that has been selling a wide variety of its members’ products to customers in central and southern Minnesota. The mission of the WFC is to attract and serve customers by providing wholesome, nutritious food produced by sustainable,

family farmers who actively seek to treat animals humanely, care for the environment and strengthen their local communities by remaining as viable entities.

As the WFC has grown, the need for joint farmer/customer education has also become apparent to its producers. The WFC wants to establish a food system that reflects “Food with a Face.” WFC producers want customers to know specifically who and how their food is produced as well as the options and tradeoffs associated with food production.

Kristen Corselius, a graduate student at the University of Minnesota, is working as a summer intern developing WFC farmer profiles. Producer profiles are one tool that WFC is using to increase the customer’s knowledge of and commitment to a sustainable food system. Likewise, WFC producers want to understand their customers’ preferences to better serve their needs.

On September 25, 1999, WFC producers are hosting a harvest festival for its WFC customers. The goal of the harvest festival is to bring consumers and producers together to dialogue about customer satisfaction with WFC products.

For more information, contact Kristen Corselius at [corse001@tc.umn.edu](mailto:corse001@tc.umn.edu) or telephone (612) 625-9760.

## **Muscoplat new dean of College of Agricultural, Food, Environmental Sciences**

Charles Muscoplat has been named dean of the College of Agricultural, Food and Environmental Sciences, vice president for agricultural policy and director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Minnesota. As vice president and the college’s chief academic and administrative officer, Muscoplat will be responsible for the college’s teaching, research and outreach programs and for managing issues related to Minnesota and its national and international roles in global agricultural systems.

Muscoplat is a widely recognized scientist and leader in biotechnology and its application to human, plant and animal improvement. He has extensive expertise in academia, basic and applied research, teaching, business, technology transfer, administration, FDA regulatory affairs, public service in agriculture and public policy development. He helped start one of the nation’s first agricultural biotechnology companies, developed the nation’s first biotechnology animal health product (Genecol 99) and played a key role in developing the first U.S. biotechnology plant product, herbicide-tolerant corn.

“Dr. Muscoplat is an outstanding administrator and scholar,” said Robert Bruininks, executive vice president and provost. “His knowledge of life science industries and technology commercialization will enhance public-private partnerships and the university’s commitment to modern food and agricultural sciences, environmental issues and biotechnology.”

Added university President Mark Yudof, “Dr. Muscoplat combines the talents and perspectives of a first-rate scientist, academician, businessperson, manager and advocate for agriculture. I believe his appointment as dean and vice president sends a strong signal that the University of Minnesota is committed to the agriculture community, to outreach to support farmers and to technological innovation. I also believe he will work well with students, faculty and alumni and that he will serve as a strong voice for agriculture in my administration.”

## **Travel scholarships to Small Farm Show**

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCRSARE) program is making \$500 scholarships available to Extension personnel, other ag educators, and farmers who would like to attend the 7th National Small Farm Trade Show and Conference in Columbia, Mo., Nov. 5-6, 1999. This year's theme is "Profitable Alternatives for Family Farms."

The event will feature one-hour seminars, short courses, demonstrations, and exhibitors' booths. To apply for a scholarship, by Sept. 15 submit a letter indicating why you'd like to attend the conference and a budget estimate for travel expenses to: Paula Ford, 4A Edwards Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan KS 66506, or email [pford@oz.oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:pford@oz.oznet.ksu.edu).

## **New publications available on variety of topics**

Swine producers who are interested in alternative housing systems might want to purchase copies of *Hoop Structures for Grow-Finish Swine, AED-41*, and *Hoop Structures for Gestating Swine, AED-44*. These 16-page digests cover design and construction details, management, and cost comparisons to other systems. The digests are from the MidWest Plan Service (MWPS), which is an organization located at Iowa State University that publishes educational materials for agricultural audiences.

Beef and dairy producers who are having problems with muddy yards and cattle lanes might be interested in another MWPS publication, *Using All-Weather Geotextile Lanes and Pads, AED-45*. This publication provides an overview of how to develop all-weather surfaces using geotextile fabric.

*Field Guide to On-Farm Composting, NRAES-114*, is a 118-page handbook that includes chapters on equipment, raw materials, process control, site considerations, composting mortalities, and compost utilization. The handbook is published by the Natural Resource, Agriculture, and Engineering Service (NRAES), which is an organization similar to MWPS that is located at Cornell University.

All four publications (above) are available from: MidWest Plan Service Orders, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department, University of Minnesota, 1390 Eckles Ave, St. Paul MN 55108, phone: (612) 625-9733. The AEDs are \$4 each (plus \$0.26 sales tax for Minnesota residents) and the NRAES handbook is available for \$14 (plus \$0.91 sales tax for Minnesota residents).

*Sharing the Harvest: A Guide to Community Supported Agriculture* offers practical information and inspiration for starting and running a community supported agriculture (CSA) operation. The book was started by Robyn van En and was completed by Elizabeth Henderson after Robyn's death. It was published by Chelsea Green Co. with assistance from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. The book can be ordered for \$24.95 plus \$6 shipping and handling from Chelsea Green at (800) 639-4099.

*The Economics of Organic Grain and Soybean Production in the Midwestern United States* shows that farm profits from organic cropping systems can equal or exceed profits from conventional rotations in the Midwest. The report is available for \$15 from the Wallace Institute, 9200 Edmonston Rd, #117, Greenbelt MD 20770-1551, phone (301) 441-8777 or [www.hawiaa.org](http://www.hawiaa.org).

*The Natural Foods Market: A National Survey of Strategies for Growth* summarizes results from over 300 interviews of food industry businesses, including farmers, manufacturers, wholesalers, and retail supermarkets. The report analyzes trends and major obstacles as well as successful business strategies in

the natural foods market. The Executive Summary is available free from the Wallace Institute (see above) and the full report is available for \$50 for non-profit organizations and \$150 for businesses.

*Small-Scale Processing Guide* uses case studies and covers things like startup, capitalization, packaging, regulatory concerns, and marketing, along with survey results and resources available for developing a processing enterprise. The guide is available for \$8.50 plus \$3 shipping and handling from the Farming Alternatives Program, 17 Warren Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853 or jmp32@cornell.edu.

### **Calendar of 1999 events...**

These events are sponsored by numerous organizations. More information is available on MISA's website: [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu)

Wednesday, September 8 and Thursday, September 9, Lanesboro. **Streamside Grazing Workshop.** Contact Dennis Neffendorf, (651) 602-7867.

Friday, September 10, 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., Morris. **Legume Cover Crops Interseeded in Corn as a Source of Nitrogen.** Contact Dian Lopez or Alan Olness, (320) 589-3411 ext. 131.

Saturday, September 11, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Duluth. **Harvest Festival.** Contact the Northeast Chapter, Sustainable Farming Association, (218) 727-1414.

Saturday, September 11, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Kerkhoven. **Low Cost Hoop Gestation.** Contact Steve Stassen, (320) 264-5932. Monday, September 13, 3:00 p.m., Red Lake Falls. Interseeding Hairy Vetch in Sunflowers and Corn. Contact Hans Kandel, (218) 253-2897.

Saturday, September 18, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Bloomington. **From Farm to Fork: Reclaiming Our Food System from Corporate Giants.** Contact Suzanne McIntosh or Andrea Kiepe, (612) 623-3666.

Tuesday, September 21, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., Hutchinson. **Reviving and Enhancing Soils for Maximizing Performance of Pastures and Livestock.** Contact Doug Rathke and Connie Karstens, (320) 587-6094.

Thursday, September 23, 10:00 a.m., Northfield. **Dry Edible Beans as an Alternative Crop in a Direct Marketing Operation.** Contact Diane and Bruce Milan, (507) 645-8282.

Saturday, October 2, 1:30 p.m., Palisade. **Surface Application of Liming Materials.** Contact Jane Grimsbo Jewett, (218) 845-2832.

Tuesday, October 12, 3:00 p.m., Shevlin. **Increasing Quality and Quantity of Pasture Forage with Management Intensive Grazing as an Alternative to Grazing Wooded Land.** Contact Michael Harmon, (218) 657-2592.

Thursday, October 28, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Windom. **Development of a Low-Cost Mechanism for the Interseeding of Companion/Cover Crops in a Corn-Soybean Rotation.** Contact Tony Thompson, (507) 831-3483.

Friday - Saturday, October 29-30, Bloomington. **Sharing the Heartland Conference: Practical Tools for Conserving Farmland and Natural Resources.** Contact Julie MacSwain, (651) 430-6818.

Tuesday, November 2, Mosinee, Wis. **Farmstead Dairy Day—Producing and Marketing Value-Added Dairy Products.** Contact Paul Dietmann, (608) 355-3250.

Friday-Saturday, November 12-13, Baraboo, Wis. **Income Options for Small Farms.** Contact Paul Dietmann, (608) 355-3250.

Friday, November 26, swine field day, two on-farm research projects: **Converting Buildings to Deep Straw-Based Units/Raising Antibiotic-Free Hogs.** 10 a.m., Dave Serfling farm, Preston (call (507) 765-2797 for directions), and 1:30 p.m., Dwight Ault farm, Austin (call (507) 437-3085 for directions).

### **About this newsletter...**

For the past year we've been funded by the Minnesota Extension Service and the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) with support from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

We're always looking for story ideas. Send them to the editor: Jack Sperbeck, 405 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108, (612) 625-1794. E-mail: [jsperbeck@extension.umn.edu](mailto:jsperbeck@extension.umn.edu). Other editorial board members: Helene Murray (612) 625-0220, [murra@021.tc.umn.edu](mailto:murra@021.tc.umn.edu); Tom Wegner (612) 374-8400, [twegner@extension.umn.edu](mailto:twegner@extension.umn.edu); and Bill Wilcke (612) 625-8205, [wwilcke@extension.umn.edu](mailto:wwilcke@extension.umn.edu)

**Our mission statement:** To help bring people together to influence the future of agriculture and rural communities to achieve socially, environmentally and economically sustainable farms and communities.